DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 210 004 IR 009 409

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TITLE Status of Librarians in Universities with Especial Reference to Developing Countries.
PUB DATE Aug 80
NOTE 23p.: Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Federation of Library Asscciations (Manila, Philippines, August 18-23, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Libraries; Compensation (Remuneration); *Developing Nations; *Librarians; Library Education; Library Technicians; Paraprofessional Personnel; *Professional Development; Professional Education; *Professional Recognition; Status

ABSTRACT

Experiences in the South Pacific, Africa, and the West Indies are the basis for this examination of the professional status of librarians in developing countries, including rank and salary, faculty or comparable privileges, and opportunities for professional education. In the instances considered, factcrs of expatriate service, individual achievement, government support, and incipient unionism are considered to be of major importance as these nations seek to produce an indigenous professionally educated staff of librarians whose members can compete for status with faculty or other comparable staff. A pragmatic approach, dedicatien, and the utilization of paraprofessionals are seen as necessary to properly balance national, institutional, and individual interests if librarians are to assist their nations to meet pressing social problems. (RAA)

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IFLA General Conference 1980

Division: General Research Libraries

Section: University Libraries and other General Research Libraries

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STATUS OF LIBRARIANS IN UNIVERSITIES WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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STATUS OF LIBRARIANS IN UNIVERSITIES WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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1. The following observations are based on my own experiences in what the British used to call overseas universities, universities established in the late forties and fifties in those parts of the Commonwealth that were or had been until after the Second World War, dependent upon the United Kingdom. I have tried to enumerate factors that in my opinion affected for better or for worse the efforts of librarians in some of the universities to have themselves recognised for what they considered themselves to be: members of an essential professional class. Conditions, circumstances, events turned out to be very different from those in the developed countries I have known, particularly in Britain, though, in some respects, not very different in some aspects from those in the Dominions like South Africa and Australia until the late fifties. When the number of professional librarians of local origin was small, as was usually the case, it was a question not of an organised campaign by a large and influential association of librarians but of individual effort by one or a few individuals; and since in their early years the 'new' overseas universities were largely manned by expatriate librarians the first pressures for the improvement of library status was exerted by them. By a happy turn of events the recommendations of the British Commissions that foreran the establishment of the universities were favourably disposed to libraries and librarians, although not all universities necessarily put them immediately into effect. In any discussion of library status in these countries I do not think it possible to ignore the occurrences in other parts of the local library scene, for such

is the interplay that an event in one sector can well influence events in another. This interaction is important because it affects attitudes of those involved,both employers and employed. Moreover there has been more governmental control over manpower and training and over the objectives and programmes of educational institutions then is normally exercised in countries of the Western world, and this is significant in that it has led to the ranking of professions according to their potential for national development, and to prescriptions for remuneration levels in line with their potential. As far as the universities have been concerned the guidelines that eventually emerged were different from those adumberated by the early commissions on higher education and adopted in the early stages when expatriate elements formed majorities. The expatriate elements and the fact that the universities were essentially implanted western institutions proved in fact to be troublesome in the long run (without gainsaying their achievements and the inevitability of their parentage). In the long run it proved unrealistic to try to reconcile the 'Western' concept of the university and their traditional approaches to higher learning with the real and less exalted needs of the communities they served. The University of the South Pacific came some twenty years later than the first British overseas universities. It was able to draw on the experiences of the others and was able from the start to regard itself as an instrument of the governments of the region for the purposes of higher teaching and research. It could not escape reliance on a strong expatriate element because of the shortage of trained local manpower. Expatriates tend to bring ideas, attitudes and ambitions that very

much reflect their backgrounds. Some appointed to the USP had already worked overseas and readily adapted themselves to local ideas and needs. But an element of disharmony has been present and will continue to be present until the government of the university is predominantly in local hands.

I shall mention three other factors that to my mind are implicit in any discussion of status. Status, in the eyes of some is what one gets; in the eyes of others also what one gives. In a small developing community professionals bear great responsibilities. Depending upon how they carry them out they gain or they lose in status. I therefore believe that in these circumstance individual achievement and the proper and generous use of it is the best guarantee of favourable recognition.

Foreign aid can often cushion professionals in universities in new nations. Things come easily and quickly. The scarcer the manpower the more opportunities for self-advancement come the way of the fortunate few. There can be a conflict in the process of development between the overpowering need to develop and the demands of training. There can be too many absences; not enough work on the ground; a strain on the institution. There is sometimes discontent with one's local lot following a taste of more glamorous opportunities elsewhere; so that governments have been anxious to provide their own essential training facilities in order that trainees might gain a better understanding of their country, its problems, and be able to set the value of their own future contributions in proper perspective. Thus, status will also depend upon demonstration of individual achievement and upon public recognition of the value

of that achievement. Status becomes more than a personal pursuit. We often ask ourselves how to persuade others that library development is worthwhile and essential and particularly so in a developing country. How does one earn recognition of one's profession? It has been suggested that the stress on information service (information for development) and the promotion of school and children's libraries to secure a future patronage are the keys.

2. When universities were founded with British funds in developing Commonwealth countries in the West Indies, Africa and South East Asia in the late forties the university librarians were among the first senior staff members to be appointed, and the libraries were among those listed for planning and construction during the first phase of building. In most cases, I think, in these particular universities, the librarians were appointed with emoluments and status of non-clinical professors. This arose from recommendations of a series of commissions on higher education overseas in schools and colleges in the countries under review. It seemed to them that it would be a major task that would confront anyone delegated to establish a major library under the given circumstances and sometimes quite from scratch, ranking in importance with the professorial role in the conduct of academic studies.

3. Old habits die hard. Not all expatriate staff appointed at that time - and most staff were expatriates and predominantly from

the United Kingdom and the Dominions - could feel wholly sympathetic towards the application of this egalitarian principal, for they were not used to it. They did not oppose the grading, so far as I know, but for them the librarian (a non-academic) was a less obvious choice for nomination to committees concerned with academic matters and development than were their academic colleagues. More difficult was the librarian's attempt to close the gap between himself or herself and the rest of the professional library staff when the time came to consider library (and administrative) staff gradings. The status accorded to the librarians of the new 'overseas' universities was not then uniformly accorded to librarians in similar positions in the countries from which they were recruited; neither in Britain, not in Australia nor in New Zealand. Lacking comparable status the librarians could be at a considerable disadvantage, in particular in not being on the vital councils of the university. When professorial status came to them they enjoyed much greater freedom of action and that much coveted representation of library interests on those councils, Moreover, it was the wedge in the door that led to academic or comparable ranking with teaching staff for the other professional members of the library staff.

4. I recall that when I myself went as Chief Librarian to the University of Melbourne in the middle fifties I was the first of the Melbourne University librarians to be given professorial rank; and indeed I might well have been the first to have held that rank in

the country as a whole. However, that did not immediately confer automatic representation on Senate or Academic Board, and only the Librarian and the Deputy Librarian enjoyed comparability with teaching staff. I seem also to remember that comparability between library and teaching staff was largely achieved during the time I spent (in the fifties and sixties) in the West Indies (University of the West Indies, Jamaica), in Uganda (Makerere University) and in Tanzania (University of Dar es Salaam), the range of library positions tending to run the gamut of the academic range (assistant lecturer through lecturer, senior lecturer, reader, professor) with such variations as were necessary to accommodate sub-gradings in the library heirarchy. There was thus reasonable parity of pay and contractual privileges. It was not possible, however, for library staff to 'go it alone'. Parity was a matter of concern to the administrative staff also and promotion of the interests of the two groups usually went hand in hand.

5. In a country relatively poor and in the throes of development one cannot but be acutely aware that while university academic staff can create for themselves a somewhat unique image so that they are seen and treated as a distinct category, the librarians have their like in other public services and it is difficult, and foolish to lay claim to superiority. Happy indeed is the situation when university and public service librarians are paid comparable salaries as was the case in Tanzania (again with sub-grades suited to the

Tanzania Library Service). Not so happy is the situation in which there are marked differences, usually in favour of the university employees, as is the case in Fiji where public library and other library development has not been progressive, while the University of the South Pacific has looked to overseas standards of employment for its senior staff from the beginning. The University is a regional institution and the situation that prevails in Fiji is common to the eleven countries in the South Pacific served by it, a situation out of which can easily arise a conflict of interests. To press for better terms of service in line with academic demands that widen farther the gap between university and library staffs elsewhere is not easy and not perhaps palatable in a small community with a small corps of librarians, although one might seek justification on the grounds that anything gained within the university might lead to improvement elsewhere or that it is one's first duty to get the best deal possible for one's staff. One can appreciate in this connection the force of the contention that a university library must call for academic training and achievement of a higher than average standard as the safeguard against erosion of the status and the quality of its staff. It is, of course, very difficult to generalise for changes are linked with local needs and capacities which vary greatly. One tends to be overtaken by events. In some developed countries the university librarian is no longer as favoured as he was. In some developing countries other categories of librarians have caught up or may have left him behind or there has been a general levelling. The

distinction used to turn largely around the possession or the lack of a degree, but with the introduction of the degree as the basic qualification for professional practice regardless of the type of library service one can no longer use it for distinguishing purposes other than qualitatively. With this general leavening, as it were, has come the call for higher degrees for posts of seniority or for higher specialised qualifications e.g. in management or in information.

6. The University of the South Pacific is, as previously mentioned, a regional institution but is located in Suva, Fiji. Its library's senior staff, like the senior administrative and technical staff of the institution, are described officially as 'comparable senior staff', i.e. comparable with the academic or teaching staff. Grading of comparable staff adheres closely to that of the teaching staff with an overrun of maximum and minimum points on the scales to provide acceptable sub-grades. Thus:

Librarian	:	equivalent to Professor
Deputy Librarian	:	equivalent to Senior Lecturer/Reader
Senior Assistant Librarian	:	equivalent to top half Lecturer/first half senior Lecturer
Assistant Librarian 1	:	equivalent to top half Lecturer
Assistant Librarian 2	:	equivalent to Assistant Lecturer/first half Lecturer

Some terms of service are applicable to all: superannuation, gratuity for those on contract, medical benefits (for the employee

only and not for the family) and earned leave (three months after three years of service). Academic staff of course have the freedom of the vacations in the intervening years, while comparable staff have a set number of working days. All are entitled to apply for study leave, though this is unlikely to be given more frequently than once in six years - the university having adopted a three year cycle. The picture is complicated by the presence of expatriate staff, staff from without the region. The above applies to them as it does to local (or in this case regional) staff; but some expatriates enjoy additional benefits given by their countries of origin as a form of aid to the University and to enable them to maintain roughly the salary levels they would have enjoyed 'at home' in similar posts. Thus they receive salary supplementation, children's education allowances, and family medical benefits, excluding the staff members themselves who receive benefits under their local terms of service. Other expatriates who are not appointed under aid arrangements between the university and their respective countries receive no such extra benefits. All expatriates are given 'home' leave at the end of each three year contract, whether aided or not; but this cost burden imposed by those who are not aided must be borne by the university, thus causing the latter, heavily dependent upon aid, to seek a proportion of aided appointments. As localisation proceeds apace expatriate numbers are reduced, of course, a financial commitment for which the institution must prepare itself.

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7. One cannot overlook the impact of trade unionism in respect of the status of the university library staff. The Association of University Teachers in Britain and the Library Association have agreed that academic library staff in universities should be linked directly with university teaching staff salary scales and as closely as possible with their conditions of service; but negotiations about the one and about the other are conducted separately. It is only recently that local comparable staff at the University of the South Pacific were given the right to three months 'earned' leave after three years of service, but they can now be satisfactorily compared with their academic colleagues in most respects. However trade union activity has created an anomolous situation as far as they are concerned. Some years ago the USP Staff Union claimed and brought into their membership all non-academic staff excepting the Vice-Chancellor and the Heads of the relevant departments: the Registry, the Bursary and the Library. As the Staff Union is mainly concerned (and indeed until now has been soley concerned) with Junior and Intermediate staff, who are recruited under quite different terms of service, and as comparable senior staff are not therefore members of the University Staff Association, which is confined to teaching staff, the comparable staff, including the senior library staff, are very much out on a limb. So far the University Staff Association has not been registered as a Union since it is not seen to be something separate from the country's teacher unions, which it does not wish to join, and which, in any

case, would not admit librarians and other 'comparables'. While this situation has not so far affected their terms of service it is not clear what the future might hold for the comparable senior staff. It has not affected their membership of the University Staff Club - a social club - which is open to all members of the academic and comparable staff. I think most librarians in universities in developing countries must have been faced wit' these or similar problems at one time or another.

8. The University of the South Pacific Library was the first large academic library to be established in the region which is its parish. The parish excludes Papua New Guinea, that now has two universities of its own. Since the USP is located in Fiji, and since, as I have stated, it has had favourable treatment, its salary conditions have not escaped the notice of the Fiji Library Association which is asking for adequate recognition of the profession as a whole and of its members by the Public Service Commission, the paramount body concerned with the classification and grading of staff in the Fiji Public Service. Its official classification excludes librarians and also archivists from the category of professionals. It includes accountants, lawyers, statisticians, agricultural and forestry officers, geologists, chemists, education officers, engineers and architects. Recently there has been evidence of a change in its outlook towards the public library service (which also oversees the governmental special libraries) in that it has, for the first time, acknowledged the need to recruit at graduate

level, although the number of recruits it anticipates at this level is disturbingly small. There is also a suspicion that the concession stemmed at least in part from a desire to reduce the time spent on professional training abroad by sending graduate recruits on one-year post-graduate courses rather than non-graduates on three-year degree courses. It might be said, as an aside, that a major obstacle to be overcome in establishing training programmes in librarianship for school teachers is the fact that the Public Service Commission gives librarianship a lower rating than teaching, so that the substitution of librarianship for an accepted teaching subject in a degree or diploma of education course could be seen as a disadvantage rather than an advantage in the pursuit of a job. For this reason one would be inclined to favour post-degree or post-diploma courses in school librarianship, given the opportunities of employment. Under the circumstances described the movement for the improvement of professional librarians in general cannot be kept apart from the institutional interests of the university library staff, or vice versa.

9. There is some indication that a levelling process will begin with private and parastatal bodies. The Suva City Council, an independent authority, has been paying its professional librarian rather better than his equivalent in the Public Library Service, and has recently considered a salary equal to that of a senior assistant librarian at the USP. The Fiji Electricity Authority is offering a comparable salary. As it is hoped that the Suva City Council Library will be taken over by the Government there is

speculation as to whether the Council employees will be made to mark time so as to be brought into line eventually with Government librarians or whether the latter will be adjusted to the levels enjoyed by Council employees or not. Marking-time is not unknown as a Government device to introduce uniformity into salaries at levels that it is thought can be afforded. There still remains a considerable difference between the remuneration of the Librarian of the University and that of the Chief Librarian of the Fiji Library Service and of the Librarian of Suva City Council, who for years have rated alongside professional assistants at the University. One might say that universities, in circumstances such as those which the USP has enjoyed, have ridden on a wave of popular belief in their inevitability so great have been the needs for high level manpower, and librarians have of course ridden with them. Towards the rest of the country's library activities there has often been public and (even worse) official apathy. There have, of course, been several outstanding exceptions to this kind of situation, e.g. in Jamaica, Ghana and Tanzania. In Tanzania in the mid-sixties the Tanzania Library Service managed to equate its scales to those paid to the library staff of the university, largely owing to the persistence and efficiency of the then expatriate Director, but also owing to a sympathetic Government. It is not good if the university appears to be excessively developed while other comparable and equally essential services are by comparison neglected. I suggest that in a poor economy there are dangers when gross discrepancies arise through uneven development between sectors of a profession.

Imbalance can result in a lack of mobility of staff. They tend to stay in the library that offers most, and when libraries and staff are few there can be an enervating lack of competition.

10. Teaching staff of a university tend to look at qualifications, research and publications as signs of excellence. At times of appointment and promotion when candidates are sifted for senior library posts academic colleagues rarely omit to look for these signs. At the USP it seems to be axiomatic among teaching staff that new local recruits to the teaching faculties should prepare themselves as soon as possible for the Master's degree, or if they already possess the Master's then for the Doctoral degree. It would be natural for library staff also to assume that the way to the top is through higher and higher degrees and there is no doubt that they would have the sympathy of some academic colleagues. It is an attitude that was much supported in pre-war days by University librarians in the United Kingdom, indeed almost in inverse ratio to their disregard for professional qualifications although their belief was not in personal reward as in the benefits to be derived by their libraries. Possession of a higher degree does indeed add to personal standing, and I should like to see senior library staff enrolled for higher degrees if these can be taken at their own university, in our case the USP, and taken at least partly in their own time. As there are at present no means of acquiring full professional qualifications in the South Pacific region everyone must

go overseas (including to Hawaii) for the first qualification, whether it be a Bachelor's (or in some cases a Master's) or a Post-graduate Diploma in Librarianship. Some of us attach importance to the broadening of experience by means of short practical assignments, and prefer that that kind of experience should be gained before involvement in further post-graduate study. Release for long periods of time for higher degrees (and particularly for one degree following shortly on another) is something that can be ill-afforded by institutions with small staffs; and in a developing situation the prime concern is that study leave should benefit the institution as well as the staff. It would be regrettable were it to bring benefit only to the staff member.

When a library such as the USP library has reached a stage of reasonable development with a fair nucleus of qualified and experienced staff one begins to feel impatient of the traditional overseas aid offerings, the too fashioned courses, the group visits, that cannot have equal relevance for the wide representation of overseas librarians of senior status who might participate. Aid, for this level of person, is often too organised; the offerings too far from being geared to the particular requirements of each participant; the self-sufficiency of the participants too underestimated. Thus for professional advancement and in the interests of the employing institution I prefer the grant that will enable a senior staff member to be attached to a particular library for a particular

purpose, or to more than one in turn; or the study/travel grant that allows the grantee, with the grantor, to devise a programme and itinerary that will have the most relevance and afford the most benefit. These can sometimes be much more satisfying and productive than organised courses and visits for large groups, and in offering a freedom of choice acknowledges in the recipient those attributes that will ensure a successful visit and credits both the employing library and the grantee with knowing how aid can best meet their own particular needs.

]]. If status in a developing country means all these things: the degree, the professional qualification, practical experience in a metropolitan country, contacts made through conferences, the further degree, etc., etc.; and if it implies (as it seems to do) attainment of an international standard, it calls for a vastly expensive series of exercises that must be a cause of concern to countries of the South Pacific, that normally cannot offer these facilities themselves, or only in part. It can entail travel over great distances, accommodation in expensive foreign lands, rapid adjustment to new modes of life, to people and things. It requires much effort and preparation. And the cost might have to be repeated for each new qualification, for each new experience. It is, in general, attainable only through some foreign assistance; and is often totally dependent for its realisation on such aid, so that no aid would mean no training. The outcome is that for the average citizen the odds are against him or her being able to enter

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on an expensive career of his or her own choosing and to qualify for that career; the more so (unless one has the necessary private means) as Governments largely do the choosing: what must be studied, to what degree, and who should be sent. In these circumstances, having been sent once how many more times can one expect to go? There are thus good reasons for restricting opportunities for further degrees, for preferring the benefits of scholarships and grants for first qualification as giving a wider spread, and for scepticism towards perpetual personal study and qualification when resources are scarce and added qualifications are not deemed immediately essential to local needs.

12. One cannot like a situation in which the University's librarians must cling, as it were, to their teaching colleagues in order to maintain status and salary and respect, knowing that elsewhere in their profession conditions would be inferior. It would be satisfying to know that attachment was that of equal to equal as members of an institution and that elsewhere their professional colleagues were also equal. 'Elsewhere' - in the South Pacific - would certainly be seen as different, unfavourably so, at the present time. It is my belief that two developments are necessary to arouse interest in libraries on the part of officials and the public: both long-term. First - for an appreciation of libraries in general - the promotion of libraries in schools to create the reading public of the future and generate an early appreciation of libraries; and second - for the development of governmental,

research and special libraries - the promotion of 'information', through bibliography, improved reference services, and a more conscious attitude towards the advanced readers' needs on the part of library staff; in other words to make libraries more responsive to development needs. It is not easy to gain support for libraries' own development when offical preoccupation is with developments that bring in more obvious economic returns. However, there are signs of hope in Fiji: the press has become more sympathetic towards library progress; teachers are asking for more materials with which to teach and therefore for better school collections, as well as for some basic training in library organisation; research workers embarking on new, ambitious and aided projects are including among their requirements 'information' elements, whether as book grants or as information officers or both. Much of what was formerly undertaken by outside experts is now being tackled by local workers and researchers. The greater the number of developments involving investigation and research and carried out by nationals or 'regionals', the stronger will be the expectation that information about them should be available locally. Librarians are more aware of these opportunities to become partners in these ventures and every successful step forward in this respect will add to their stature. A close involvement with such projects and a share of the benefits from aid in the form of books, etc. is sometimes the only means of acquiring the means by which they can prove their usefulness.

12. I have interpreted 'status' in terms of rank, salary, and privileges under terms of service. I have considered comparability with teaching staff to be a main concern of university librarians. I have tried to indicate that, in my experience, the struggle for status within the University might not be a straight-forward business since teachers and comparable staff are regarded as rather distinct categories; and that librarians in a developing country are drawn inevitably into close association with colleagues in other libraries, and even more so if there is a Library Association to work towards ends that will bring satisfaction to all members. I have indicated that the librarian in a country where there are overwhelming social problems cannot afford but to give the best possible service within his or her means, and I have hinted at the need of a pragmatic approach to training that balances personal, institutional and national interests. The small community is prone to judge one not by one's qualifications alone but by the service one gives, by the kind of librarian one is. In any case one must justify one's status.

13. Lastly, a brief reference to the semi-professionals upon whom, in poor countries, professionals rely so much, who greatly outnumber professionals, and who are often, by force of circumstances, placed in control of small libraries. They also seek status. In universities they can not be regarded as 'comparable', but there is room at the top for considerable overlapping of the 'comparable'.

scale. They look to a career with long-term prospects and recognised qualifications, and particularly to qualifications that might give them entry to professional studies. Their training is almost bound to be local since both numbers involved and costs preclude overseas courses. I think it should cover thoroughly semi-professional matters, so that the professional preserve remains clearly one for professionals. I think in many instances one could survive with rather fewer professionals and more highly trained intermediate staff, and I think that one way of arriving at a more realistic assessment of professional manpower needed would be to define more precisely what semi-professionals could do even to the point of trespassing on what we like to regard as the professional prerogative. It would save professionals from doing (as they so often do) what less qualified staff could do just as well. Papua New Guinea recognized this when it created two kinds of non-professional training: a certificate course for sub-professionals and a diploma course for semi-professionals, the diploma affording entry at a later date to a graduate course. By raising the standards expected of non-professionals it is possible to restrict the number of professionals to an extent that is impossible with low level non-professional training, when professionals are indeed obliged to do much semi-professional work. It is, I think, also true that accumulated experience on the part of a good library assistant can erode the differential based on qualifications. The point I would like to make therefore is that wherever there are likely to be too few rather than too many professionals it is wise to cultivate those in the

middle rank.

14. At the same time one should be alert to misinterpretation of the role of the semi-professional on the part of major employers, who wish to use semi-professionals where professionals ought clearly to be appointed. This is not likely to occur in universities, but the Fiji Library Association had occasion to be perturbed when it learned that the Public Service Commission was regarding the sub-professional Fiji Certificate in Librarianship as equivalent to 'registered librarianship'; and when a consequent College advertisement for a professional appointment assumed a rough equivalence between the ALA, the Fiji Certificate in Librarianship (plus three years experience) and a degree. Were this attitude to prevail in the public services it would be difficult for the University's librarians to maintain (even if they wished) an attitude of aloofness towards the matter of national status. This in no way belittles those who hold the Certificate. Indeed it is in the professionals' interest to ensure that the intermediate group are as skilled as possible; for the service upon which they themselves depend for their reputation (or status) can be made or marred by the quality of the contribution of their non-professional colleagues. Their standing might be said to rise or fall with the fortunes (in a qualitative sense) of the library.

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